



San Francisco Tape Music Festival

Program 4

Sunday January 12th, 2020

7pm, Victoria Theater

PROGRAM

Synchronisms #2 (1964)

Mario Davidovsky

Diane Grubbe, flute; Matt Ingalls, clarinet
Benjamin Kreith, violin; Monica Scott, cello
John Ingle, conductor

Blue Sedan (2020)

Matt Ingalls/sfSoundGroup

Diane Grubbe, flute; Kyle Bruckmann, oboe; Matt Ingalls, clarinet
John Ingle, alto saxophone; Tom Dambly, trumpet
Brendan Lai-Tong, trombone; Kjell Nordeson, percussion
Monica Scott, cello; Lisa Mezzacappa, bass

Clarinet Threads (1985)

Denis Smalley

Matt Ingalls, clarinet

- interval -

Synchronisms #3 (1964)

Mario Davidovsky

Monica Scott, cello

Clutterfields (filthy quilt) (2019)

Kyle Bruckmann

Kyle Bruckmann, oboe; Matt Ingalls, bass clarinet

Force Fields (2006)

Jonty Harrison

Diane Grubbe, flute; Matt Ingalls, clarinet; Hadley McCarroll, piano

Kjell Nordeson, percussion; Benjamin Kreith, violin

Natalia Badziak, viola; Monica Scott, cello; Lisa Mezzacappa, bass

John Ingle, conductor

- interval -

Ghosts of Ancient Hurricanes (2019)

Ken Ueno

Diane Grubbe, flute; Kyle Bruckmann, oboe; Matt Ingalls, clarinet

John Ingle, alto saxophone; Tom Dambly, trumpet

Brendan Lai-Tong, trombone; Kjell Nordeson, percussion

Ken Ueno, voice

SFSOUNDGROUP

The parent organization of The San Francisco Tape Music Festival, sfSound is one the most exciting and fiercely innovative contemporary music organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. Their performing ensemble of performer-composers, **sfSoundGroup**, presents their own compositions, improvisations, new commissions, electronic music, and standard avant-garde repertoire. With a mix of works from the European, American, and contemporary Californian avant-garde, their concerts explore the continuum between notated composition and free improvisation, often sounding more "electronic" than "acoustic."

Mario Davidovsky - *Synchronisms* #2 (1964)

flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and electronic sound

When Davidovsky came to the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center in 1960, he became a central part of a community of composers seeking new expressive means and willing to use their highly developed musicianship as the point of departure. When first confronted with electronic sounds, Davidovsky heard, not something exciting and new, but something very crude, especially when compared to the highly refined, two hundred plus year old tradition of western instruments that was already in his ear. To begin to approach the sensitivity of traditional instruments, Davidovsky spent countless hours listening to each sound. He painstakingly constructed phrases made up mostly of short articulated events, accepting nothing that did not have a convincing dramatic shape.

Still, composers primarily write music for concert performance, and it was natural for Davidovsky to begin to think about combining electronic sounds with live instruments. It is for his work in this area that Davidovsky is certainly best known: his series of *Synchronisms*. In these pieces he achieved the first true "hyper-instruments" where the live and electronic modulate one another and become something totally new, joined in one expanded acoustical space; a kind of musical virtual reality. To this day he remains the acknowledged master of the medium of electronically manipulated instruments and these pieces are the touchstones for anyone trying to work in this area.

Mario Davidovsky (1934-2019) was a renowned composer best known for his series of twelve *Synchronisms* that combine live instrumental performances with pre-recorded electronic sound. Born in Argentina, Davidovsky traveled to the U.S. in 1958 to study with Aaron Copland, who was not a fan of electronic music, believing it to be limited by its reliance on electronic media. Milton Babbitt encouraged Davidovsky to permanently move to New York City in 1960. He has taught at the Manhattan School of Music, Yale University, City University, CUNY, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Michigan. He was a visiting professor at the Di Tella Institute in Argentina and joined the music department at

Harvard University in 1994. In 1997, Davidovsky received the honored Christopher and Stephan Kaske Foundation Music prize for his contributions in developing contemporary music. He received the Pulitzer Prize in 1971 for his *Synchronism No. 6* for piano and tape.

Matt Ingalls / sfSound - Blue Sedan (2020)

amplified ensemble, live processing, and tape

Blue Sedan is an updated version of an older piece with sfSound: *False Awakening*, for closely-miced improvisers evoking a half-dreamed-middle-of-the-night sound world. This version introduces more instruments and automated spatialization from a C++ macOS application i wrote this week! The title comes from the 1940's *Dragnet* radio drama - something I found myself listening to nightly when trying to deal with a prolonged bout of insomnia. It seems in almost every episode, the suspect's car is always a blue sedan.

Reviled for his "shapeless sonic tinkering" by the Los Angeles Times, clarinetist, composer, improviser, and computer musician **Matt Ingalls** is the founder and Artistic Director of sfSound. He helped create the San Francisco Tape Music Collective in 1999. He received Deuxième Prix, Lauréats des Puys (Catégorie Humour) in the 1994 Concours International de Musique Electroacoustique de Bourges and was the first recipient of the ASCAP/SEAMUS Commission and Recording Prize. A professional software engineer, his audio tools Soundflower, MacCsound, and Aardvark Synth have been used widely throughout the world.

Denis Smalley - *Clarinet Threads* (1985)

amplified clarinet and tape

The title *Clarinet Threads* reflects the relationship between the clarinet and the electroacoustic sounds. The clarinet can produce a variety of sound types – key noises, air sounds, less definite pitches, very high notes produced by biting the reed, multiphonics... The clarinet is threaded through the electroacoustic fabric, sometimes merged with it, sometimes surfacing in a more soloistic role. Besides passages which use the clarinet in a traditional manner there are stylized environments drawn from outside music – the calls and cries of nature, the movement of wind and water, and textural motion suggesting floating and drifting.

Clarinet Threads was composed in the Electroacoustic Music Studio of the University of East Anglia in Norwich with many of the electroacoustic sounds created during visits to a variety of studios – the SSSP System of the Computer Systems Research Institute at the University of Toronto, the Finnish Radio Experimental Studio in Helsinki, Studio 123 of the Groupe de recherches musicales in Paris, and the University of Birmingham Electroacoustic Music Studio. *Clarinet Threads* was commissioned and premiered by Roger Heaton with funds provided by Eastern Arts.

Denis Smalley's (b. 1946) musical output is made up entirely of electroacoustic works, many of which have received international prizes – the Fylkingen Prize (1975), awards at the Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Competition (1977, '83, '92), the Special Prize of the International Confederation of Electroacoustic Music (1983), and the Prix Ars Electronica (1988). In his writings and lectures he has made original contributions to the field of electroacoustic music, in particular his investigations into the listener's perception and interpretation of electroacoustic music, and his development of the notion of 'spectromorphology' (the shaping of sound spectra through time).

Smalley was born in Nelson, New Zealand in 1946. Having shown early talent as a chorister, pianist and organist he first studied music at the University of Canterbury, moving to the Victoria University of

Wellington to take a first class honors degree in composition. He was also active as a recital organist giving the first New Zealand performances of music by Messiaen and Ligeti. After leaving Wellington College for almost three years, he received a French Government bursary for study in Paris, where he spent a year in Messiaen's composition class at the Conservatoire de Paris. At the same time he took the electroacoustic composition 'workshop' of the Groupe de recherches musicales (GRM), completing the *Diplôme de musique électroacoustique et de recherche musical*. He next settled in York, completing his doctorate in composition at the University of York. In 1976 he was appointed Lecturer in Music at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. In 1994 he was appointed Professor of Music and Head of the Department of Music at City University in London.

Mario Davidovsky - *Synchronisms #3* (1964)

cello and electronic sound

The *Synchronisms* belong to a series of short pieces wherein conventional instruments are used in conjunction with electronic sounds. The attempt here has been made to preserve the typical characteristics of the conventional instruments and of the electronic medium respectively – yet to achieve integration of both into a coherent musical texture.

In the planning and realization of these pieces, two main problems arise – namely proper synchronization (a) of rhythm and (b) of pitch. During the shorter episodes where both electronic and conventional instruments are playing, rather strict timing is adhered to. However, in the more extended episodes of this type, an element of chance is introduced to allow for the inevitable time discrepancies that develop between the live performer(s) and the constant-speed tape recorder.

To achieve pitch coherence between the conventional instruments which use the 12-tone chromatic scale and the electronic medium which is non-tempered, use is made of tonal occurrences of very high density – manifested for example by a very high speed succession of attacks, possible only in the electronic medium. Thus, in such instances – based on high speed and short duration of separate tones, it is impossible for the ear to perceive the pure pitch value of each separate event; though in reacting, it does trace so to speak a statistical curve of the density. Only in a very few instances have tempered electronic pitches been employed in the *Synchronisms*. Throughout all three pieces, the tape recorder has been used as an integral part of the instrumental fabric.

Kyle Bruckmann - Clutterfields (filthy quilt) (2019)

an obstacle course for 2 improvisers with electronics

As a composer/performer, I'm particularly drawn to music that foregrounds our shared experience in the moment of performance – in which a composition is primarily a means to the real-time *act of playing and listening* together, more so than the end itself. What this entails is that I make music to be played by me and/or my friends. Forms tend to be open-ended and modular; improvisation figures prominently. But more critically, the written materials require an improvisational mindset: they often take the form of procedural games and notational eccentricities that intentionally evade perfectibility. I see my job as constructing rickety frames within which performers can interactively deploy their idiosyncratic artistic voices. So: *Clutterfields (filthy quilt)* is the latest in a string of otherwise resolutely abstract works that enable the very concrete occurrence of certain people playing together. While I can imagine this one working for various duo configurations, Matt is particularly well suited for the obstacle course, with a long history of putting up with such nonsense from me.

Oboist **Kyle Bruckmann's** widely ranging work as a composer/performer, educator, classical freelancer and new music specialist extends from conservatory-trained foundations into gray areas encompassing free jazz, post-punk rock, and the noise underground. His creative work within an international community of improvisers and sound artists can be heard on more than 80 recordings of various genres. Current ensemble affiliations include sfSound, Splinter Reeds, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Eco Ensemble, the Stockton Symphony, and Quinteto Latino. He is Assistant Professor of Practice in Oboe and Contemporary Music at University of the Pacific, and also teaches at UC Santa Cruz, Davis and Berkeley.

Jonty Harrison - *Force Fields* (2006)

musique concrète for 8 instrumentalists and fixed sounds

Sometime around 2002, my friend and then colleague at Birmingham, Dr Erik Oña, suggested to me that I might like to compose a piece for the Thürmchen Ensemble. I must confess that I reacted with some hesitation as, since about 1992, I had written only two pieces involving instrumentalists – a one-minute piece for the 60th birthday of my former teacher, Bernard Rands, and *Abstracts* (1998) for 8-channel tape and large orchestra (interestingly, *Abstracts* was also the result of prompting from another colleague and long-time friend, Dr – now Professor – Vic Hoyland). Erik countered my scepticism by stressing that he and the group specifically wanted me to compose ‘in my normal way’ – i.e. starting from the sonic properties of sound material itself, just as I do in my acousmatic work.

On this basis, I agreed, and towards the end of 2003, found myself on the first of two visits to Cologne to meet and record the players. I made some notes during the recordings about the extended techniques they were demonstrating and how the resulting sounds might be notated. Work on the piece was delayed by problems in establishing where the premiere might take place and by the fact that I experience a protracted period of illness between late 2004 and mid-2005. Eventually, I returned to work on the recordings I had made, only to discover that I had lost the notes I had made on how the sounds were produced and notated. I soon realised, however, that this meant that I really *would* have to work acousmatically (in my normal way) and I began to compose isolated musical moments using the edited sound material from my recording sessions. These were then re-ordered to establish the broad structure of the work, and component elements drawn out as the basis for extension, elaboration and transformation via digital signal processing; these were assembled into the 8-channel fixed sounds. Finally, the recordings making up the instrumental parts were transcribed into the score and parts. The work thus existed in sound before it existed in notation. The title reflects the manner in which

certain sound types or sonic behaviours dominate for a while and then become dormant.

Jonty Harrison (born 1952) studied at the University of York (BA, 1973; DPhil in Composition, 1980). Between 1976 and 1980 he worked at the National Theatre and City University, London. In 1980 he joined the Music Department of the University of Birmingham, where he became Professor of Composition and Electroacoustic Music and Director of the Electroacoustic Music Studios and BEAST; he is now Emeritus Professor. He has won several international prizes (Bourges, Ars Electronica, Musica Nova, Destellos) and been commissioned by leading organisations and performers. His music appears on four solo albums (*empreintes DIGITALEs*, Montreal) and on several compilations (NMC; Mnémosyne Musique Média; CDCM/Centaur; Asphodel; Clarinet Classics, FMR, Edition RZ and EMF).

Ken Ueno - Ghosts of Ancient Hurricanes (2019)

flute (with glissando headjoint), oboe, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet (doubling slide trumpet), trombone, percussion, extended voice, and 8-channel tape

Commissioned by sfSound, made possible through the Musical Grant Program, which is administered by InterMusic SF, and supported by the Heller Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, and San Francisco Grants for the Arts.

Dear audience for the premiere on January 12, 2020, as you read this, I want to let you know something. I turned 50 yesterday.

One morning, when I was composing this piece, I woke up to find on my online news feed an article about how blue holes in the Caribbean are repositories of soil samples from hurricanes from up to 1500 years ago. That a cataclysmic meteoric event can create a space that can be a repository of meteorological traumas that passed above them, embodying layers of histories and scales of time, I found relatable to not only to music and composition, but to my life.

Years ago, on a bright cloud-less day, I went to see the Blue Hole in Belize with my partner at the time. We chartered a private plane to take us there. The big Blue Hole, perfectly round and large, beautiful and strange, like an eye, perhaps the terrestrial punctuation that marked the demise of the dinosaurs, impressed upon us a change weightier than just a postcard-like image in memory. Having born witness to this minor miracle, we were transformed, perhaps in the way that T.S. Eliot describes the Magi were changed after witnessing the birth of the Christ Child and returning to their lands (*We returned to our places, these Kingdoms, But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, With an alien people clutching their gods*). Sometimes we would regale in the memory of that day, as evidence of hope in the world, that the creativity and beauty of the world is grander, indeed, than what man can imagine. But, she, my former partner, too, was prone to

storms. Physical tantrums which carved lithic sculptures into my life and psyche.

One of the thematic obsessions of my compositional career has been the consideration that destruction myths could also be creation myths. In an early work, *Ga-uah-Chon-Ch-cha*, written for the de Ereprijs competition when I was a student, I fashioned a song of rapture from fragments of Trukese (Truk is a Micronesian lagoon where many Japanese warships lay underwater), imagining the culture of a nearby island where Americans might have tested H-bombs in the 50s, projected into the future, where the history of nuclear testing had transformed into a destruction/creation myth for my fictional tribe of Ga-uahians.

There are more recent manifestations of this theme in my music as well. My opera, *Gallo*, was a reaction to seeing the landscape of my early childhood, Sendai, damaged by the Fukushima disaster, a cataclysmic natural disaster made worse by the man's science. In the opera, a soprano emerges from a beach of Cheerios after thirty minutes and, later, a counter tenor is ritually interred after having danced on the beach of Cheerios (thereby "instrumentalizing" the installation as well as allegorically enacting the destruction of the landscape). My oboe concerto, *Sawdust on Ararat*, ends with two percussionists sawing blocks of wood, at once cutting (destroying) it as well as allegorically building a new ark, warning us of the impending rise in sea level.

Last year, when I was living in Hong Kong for the year as a Visiting Professor at the City University of Hong Kong, on leave from my normal duties at UC Berkeley, I experienced the force of Typhoon Mangkhut, which was one of the most powerful storms to ever hit Hong Kong. I made audio recordings during the storm in my apartment in Wan Chai. These recordings are presented here, tonight, in eight channels, a transposition of the trace of the physical trauma of a nature event as experienced in one architectural space to another.

If one does not consider the voice an instrument, then, the megaphone is my main instrument. Armed with a megaphone, I am mobile and can incorporate the narrative possibility of movement in a space, direct my sound in different directions, at different structural materials, and angles. And articulating the resonant frequencies of different locations in a space, means that architecture, too, can be read as harmonic structure. I have developed an array of vocal techniques specific to the megaphone. For example, a kind of slap tongue whose attack is followed by a multiphonic drone shaped by changing the vowel shapes within my mouth, bespoke vowels that don't exist in any language. There are other techniques which involve ingressive singing, which, in alternation with exhaled techniques, allows me to circular-breathe.

Tonight, as my piece starts with the sounds of Typhoon Manghut, sfSound will vocalize breath sounds with megaphones as they traverse the theatre on their way to the stage, an "orchestration," if you will, of the sounds of the typhoon, as well as a transposition of my vocal practice to other bodies. In this way, life and music and composition telescope into this moment.

Much of my music is "person-specific" wherein the intricacies of performance practice are brought into focus in the technical achievements of a specific individual fused, inextricably, with that performer's aura. In an increasingly digitized world, "person-specificity" takes a stand against the forces that render all of us anonymous. It also runs counter to the neo-colonial tradition of transportability in Western Classical music.

Part of the allure of composing this piece for sfSound was that sfSound afforded me the possibility to take special musical risks, to write "person-specifically" for them. For example, all the wind players can circular breathe (the middle of the piece features the group circular breathing on a high Ab, microtonally inflecting the pitch to various, specific degrees, creating difference tones). The microtonal inflections are orchestrationally facilitated further by the fact that Dianne Grubbe, the flutist, plays with a glissando headjoint, a sliding headjoint invented by the virtuoso, Robert Dick. The

trumpet player, Tom Dambly, has a slide trumpet, an instrument akin to a small trombone, which also contributes to the microtonal affordances of the ensemble. I wanted to end the piece with a chorale of sorts on bespoke microtonally-tuned metal pipes, which the percussionist, Kjell Nordeson, was kind enough to make himself. The piece also has a cadenza for myself and Matt Ingalls, the clarinetist, who has been my most frequent partner in improvisations in the Bay Area over the past twelve years.

As I look forward to the second half of my life, I am grateful to have had this opportunity with sfSound to coalesce some of the diverse trajectories of my art practice, to reflect on the historical scars that have sculpted me, as well as new portals of creative imaginings that these scars open into the future (my personal destruction myths qua creation myths). Most importantly, I want to thank you, dear audience, for being here and sharing and supporting this landmark moment with me.

Respectfully yours,

Ken Ueno

A recipient of the Rome Prize and the Berlin Prize, **Ken Ueno** is a composer/vocalist/sound artist who is currently a Professor at UC Berkeley, where he holds the Jerry and Evelyn Hemmings Chambers Distinguished Professorship in Music. Ensembles and performers who have championed Ken's music include Kim Kashkashian and Robyn Schulkowsky, Wendy Richman, Greg Oakes, BMOP, Alarm Will Sound, Steve Schick and SFCMP, and Frances-Marie Uitti. Ken's piece for the Hilliard Ensemble, *Shiroi Ishi*, was featured in their repertoire for over ten years. Another work, *Pharmakon*, was performed dozens of times nationally by Eighth Blackbird during their 2001-2003 seasons. As a vocalist, Ken specializes in extended techniques (overtones, throat-singing, multiphonics, extreme registers, circular singing) and has performed as soloist in his vocal concerto with orchestras in Boston, New York, Warsaw, Vilnius, Bangkok, Sacramento, Stony Brook, Pittsburgh, and North Carolina.

His sound installations have been featured at MUAC (Mexico City), Beijing, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, the Shenzhen Biennale, and Art Basel. Ken holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University. A monograph CD of three orchestral concertos was released on the Bmop/sound label. His bio appears in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*.



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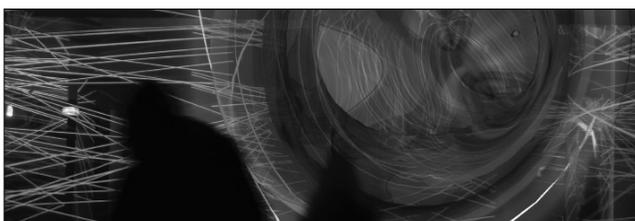
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For more information on the San Francisco Tape Music Festival and other sfSound related events go to www.sfsound.org

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